SNAKES.

The Winter Tenants of an Old Well—Some Observations.

Not far from my house is a field bordering the highway, which contains something quite entertaining to me, and which may not be wholly without interest to the readers of the Granite Monthly.

The field, on the side opposite the road, is joined by a large meadow, from which it is separated by a fringe of alders and white birches. This meadow is a favorite haunt of the bittern, and in the morning and evening hours his loud booming cries awake the echoes. Here among the wild meadow grass and sedge the lovely begonia blooms in profusion through the summer months, and the red-winged blackbird scolds from the tops of the alder thickets. On the other edge of the field, near the road, is a row of large sugar maples, throwing in summer a cool, delightful shade for the dusty traveler, and one giant elm, reaching out his proud branches 80 feet or more above the earth, and seeming to draw haughtily aloof from the more humble trees at his side.

Years ago there was an old farmhouse with its accompanying barn in this field; but long ago they were moved away, and the cellar was filled up with rocks and dirt. Beneath the elm is the old well; but this, like the cellar, is filled up with rocks and covered over with dirt. This well is my snake den. Here they stay through the winter. Black snakes, striped snakes, green snakes, wood snakes and adders; snakes, long, short, big and little, live together among the rocks in the old well for nearly six months in the year.

They do not come out until the latter part of April; for the heat cannot reach them very early in their underground home. After the ground has been thoroughly warmed and the sun is shining bright, some warm day near the close of April or the first of May, I have seen three black heads sticking out of the ground from one hole. Go near them, and all disappear.

More commonly, one will appear at a time. First with his nose just in sight he may lie all day, if not disturbed, not rising above the level of the ground. Next day he is bolder and stays for hours, resting about six inches from the mouth of the hole, looking like a dried stick from the tree above him. Approach nearer, and the head sways slightly and he backs out of sight. But you cannot keep him long in the den after the warm days of summer have actually begun. He will sneak out when you are not looking, and escape.

The adder does not come out in the manner of the blacksnake. He may lie for a day or two with his nose just visible, in order to get warmed up, but when he gets ready to come out he does so without any reconnoitering. I have never seen an adder's head raised above the ground when he is ready to come out. In this den the blacksnakes predominate, there probably being half a dozen of these to one of any other kind. Adders come next on the list, and last, a few striped, green and wood snakes. These are smaller than their neighbors and quicker, darting back into the hole very suddenly when you approach. I have seldom been able to capture any of these, but nearly every spring I get some black ones and a few adders. The longest snake captured from this den was a black one, five feet four inches long. They will probably average about four feet.

I have never seen as many snakes here since as there were the first spring the den was discovered. Perhaps it is because I do not watch them as closely as I did then, but I do not think as many winter here now. I was quite young when we found these snake holes one day by accident, and not having much else to do I watched the place very closely, and killed a large number before they were warm and nimble enough to escape, for at first they are numb and stupid. Sometimes, impatient at the slow motions of some old fellow who did not seem inclined to show more than a few inches of his head and neck, I would creep as near as possible, unobserved by keeping behind the old elm, then by making a quick rush, I would be able to seize him by the neck before he could back into the ground. Even then they would resist so firmly as sometimes to allow themselves to be pulled to pieces, rather than let go their hold from the rocks below. I have never seen a snake lingering around here in the fall, but they know some way to find the den, for since the first spring the number has not seemed to diminish, and each spring after the snow has all disappeared and the surface of the ground is warm and dry I expect to see a black head sticking out of the old well under the elm. —Granite Monthly.

Only One of That Kind.

"I wish I had been born a man," said the young woman in the course of the controversy.

"Really," said the young man, "I think Adam is the only person on record who had that experience."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

A. E. Buck, the Republican boss of Georgia, was nominated to be United States Minister to Japan.

James Boyle, of Ohio, was nominated to be United States Consul at Liverpool England.

There is quite a little excitement in Adair county over the discovery of onyx stone.

There is a man in Washington county who says he has drank 262,000 cups of coffee.

Shepherdsville will soon have telephone connection with Boston and Elizabethtowr.

The Senate at Washington adopted a resolution protesting against the trial of Gen. Ruiz Rivera, the captured Cuban commander, by drum head court martial.

SPEAKERS OF THE HOUSE.

Many Who Were Famous and Many Who Were Not.

There have been 54 congresses. There have been 32 speakers of the house of representatives. When the term "speaker" originated in England, it was the custom of the sovereign to deliver orally to parliament such communication as he desired to make at the commencement of a session. The house so addressed responded to the communication. The presiding officer headed the procession of members of the house, waited upon the sovereign and read the response, thus speaking for the whole body; therefrom comes the term "speaker," which we adopted from the British parliament. The first congress heard Washington's address and prepared a reply, which the speaker, accompanied by the members of the house, delivered to the president May 8, 1789.

Thomas Jefferson determined that his communications to congress should be made by written message, and that no answer would be expected. This led to a general change in this regard in congress and other American legislative bodies. Notwithstanding this, the title "speaker" has adhered, and many of the former speakers may be included, if not, indeed, all of them, in one of two classes: Either they have become celebrated afterward in the field of national politics, or they have become totally obscure. In the former class are to be included Henry Clay, who was the speaker in three congresses, and was moreover, a United States senator, secretary of state, and repeatedly a condidate for president; John Bell, of Tennessee, who was secretary of war, United States senator, and a candidate for the presidency in 1860; James K. Polk, who was the eleventh president of the United States, inaugurated in 1845, ten years after he became speaker; Robert M. T. Hunter, of Virginia, who was United States senator and confederate secretary of war; Robert C. Winthrop, of Massachusetts, who was a United States senator from the Bay state: Howell Cobb, of Georgia, who was governor of that state, secretary of the treasury under President Buchanan, and a member of the confederate congress; Galusha A. Grow, a veteran member of congress, who, born in Connecticut in 1823, was elected in November a representative from Pennsylvania; Nathaniel P. Banks, Schuyler Colfax, afterward vice president; James G. Blaine, twice secretary of state, a United States senator from Maine and a republican candidate for president in 1884; John G. Carlisle, afterward United States senator and now secretary of the treasury; Charles F. Crisp, of Georgia, and Thomas B. Reed. These are some—but not all—of the speakers who have obtained celebrity.

The list of speakers who are little remembered is perhaps even longer. In recent years there has been J. Warren Keifer, of Ohio. Before the war there was William Pennington, of New Jersey, who had been governor of that state—he was elected governor 23 years before he became speaker—and there was Andrew Stevenson, of Virginia, who presided over the deliberations of four successive American congresses, and was the only speaker to do so. Few persons of the present day and few students of American history remember even the name of Stevenson; fewer still know from what state he came. The speakership of congress is either a stepping stone for an ambitious statesman or the culminating point of official service for a negative man whose choice is sometimes dictated by the desire or necessity for compromise. With the enlargement of membership in congress the powers of the speaker increase, as the enlargement of the senate has a contrary effect by limiting the influence of the vice president.—N. Y. Sun.

Nails of Various Sorts.

The first nails were undoubtedly the sharp teeth of various animals; then, it is believed, pointed fragments of flint followed. The first manufactured metal nails were of bronze. The nail with which Jael killed Sisera was a wooden tent-pin probably pointed with iron. Bronze nails have been found in the Swiss lake dwellings, in several places in France and in the Valley of the Nile. Until the present century iron nails were forged, a blacksmith being able to make only two or three dozen a day. The first cut-nails were made by Jeremiah Wilkinson in Rhode Island in 1775. The first patented nail machine was by Perkins, 1795, and its product of 200,000 nails a day was considered so enormous that some persons deemed the result due to a supernatural agency. Many improvements in nail making machines, greatly increasing the quantity and quality of their output, have been made in the present century.

—A snowstorm costs a large city an immense sum of money. After the last storm in New York city the cost of clearing the principal streets reached nearly $100,000.

UNDONE BY HIS DOUBLE.

A Man Who Pressed a Supposed Compliment Too Far.

When you have been complimented—or when you think you have been complimented—once, about the best thing to do about it is to let it go at that and not try to make a serial story of it.

Paul Wilstach, of the Columbia theater staff, was taught this at one time in his life. Mr. Wilstach was entertaining a theatrical friend and his wife—two persons whose latest venture had led them into the southwest. One day in the course of the visit Mr. Wilstach and the masculine guest—call him Mr. Davis for short—were conversing about famous western characters. The talk touched upon Frank James.

"I knew Frank James very well," said Mr. Davis. "He's quite a fellow, as you perhaps know."

"Yes, I rather imagine he must be considered as one of the stars of southwestern life," said Wilstach admiringly. "It must be a great thing to be a famous man even if your fame is of a peculiar sort. By the way, I don't remember ever having seen a picture of Frank James. What does he look like, anyway?"

"Well, do you know," Mr. Davis replied, "I don't believe I ever saw one man who resembled another so closely as you yourself resemble him. I have noticed it frequently and have intended to speak to you about it."

Mr. Wilstach was delighted. To be the double of a man known probably all over the continent was some distinction.

But he could not be content to rest in his delight. He must press the limit of it. He wanted other people to know about it. For of what use is it to look like a famed character unless the fact is generally known? There was to be a theater party of friends of the Wilstachs and Davises that night, and before the party had reached their boxes the proud Mr. Wilstach had succeeded in conveying the story of his resemblance to all the members, with the exception of Mrs. Davis, wife of the man who had originally told him of it. Watching his chance when he was sure of attention of all his friends, Wilstach said: "Oh, Mrs. Davis, you know Frank James, the eminent western ex-bandit, rather well, do you not?" Mrs. Davis conceded that she did.

"Tell me what sort of a looking man he is? Whom would you say he resembles?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Davis, carelessly, "I should say like almost any old clod-hopping-looking farmer—one of the kind, you know, who patronizes the gold-brick industry and blows out the gas."

The curtain went up on the next act then, and Mr. Wilstach sat in silent and depressed pain, and no one in all that box party had a tender word of sympathy for him.—Chicago Record.

LADY BLESSINGTON.

Melancholy Results of Her Efforts in Literature.

"The most gorgeous Lady Blessington," as she was christened by her very old admirer, Dr. Parr, has long since passed into the regions of oblivion for the general world, says the London Spectator. As an authoress she never succeeded in making any mark, though she worked at the business as hard as any of her successors of the present day. Her novels were many and fashionable, Mrs. Gore-like in their method and filled with strange and wandering scraps of French. She edited books of beauty for fancy clients and at fancy prices and when the News was first started under the editorship of Charles Dickens she was offered an engagement as a purveyor of fashionable intelligence and asked £800 a year for it. She was offered either £400 as a certainty or £250 for six months on approval and confidently chose the latter, with the melancholy result at the end of the term—Dickens having in the meantime retired from his uncongenial work and John Foster having accepted his post—she was informed that her services were no longer wanted.

She fought for her hand hard enough in later days, poor lady, after years of "Arabian Nights" luxury with her magnificent husband, but we fear that her position in the literary world was not at any time one of solid security. Privately she lived under a cloud from the scandal which always connected her name with Count d'Orsay and, we suppose, not without reason. At all events, they never appear to have taken any steps to defend themselves against the charges of papers like the Age, which anticipated a similar class of journals that sprang up in our own day, and rather suffered judgment by default.

Stealing Other Men's Time.

The dozens of idle men who call on a busy man every day in order to be jovial, inspire a great love in his heart for reserved persons. — Atchison Globe.

—The United States and Germany are the only two great powers of the world that have no postal savings banks.

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